N080-630 ERIC REPORT RESUME

ED 010 065 10-06-66 24 (REV)

RESEARCH ON LIBRARY SERVICES IN METROPOLITAN AREAS.

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NOV47159 RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIV. GRAD. SCH. OF LIB. SER., NEW
BR-5-0076
CRP-G-031
-JUN-66 OEC-4-10-273
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$1.24 31P.

LIBRARIES,, *LIBRARY PROGRAMS, RESEARCH PROJECTS, *PUBLIC LIBRARIES, *SCHOOL LIBRARIES, LIBRARY INSTRUCTION, *LIBRARY SERVICES, *SEMINARS, NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

THIS IS THE FINAL REPORT OF THE SEMINAR TO STUDY THE PROBLEMS AFFECTING LIBRARY SERVICE IN METROPOLITAN AREAS. LIBRARIANS, SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, EDUCATORS, AND AUTHORITIES IN RELATED FIELDS, FROM THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA, PARTICIPATED IN THE NINE 1-DAY SESSIONS. THE MUCH NEEDED AREAS OF RESEARCH WERE IDENTIFIED AS (1) INFORMATION NEED AND SUPPLY, (2) SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS, (3) EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WORK IN LIBRARIES, (4) LIBRARY OPERATIONS, AND (5) HISTORICAL STUDIES. (GC)

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CRP G-031

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Research on Library Services in Metropolitan Areas

FINAL REPORT

To the U. S. Office of Education
Project No. 5-0076
Contract No. OE-4-10-273

"Seminar to Study the Problems Affecting Library Service in Metropolitan Areas"

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June 1966

Final Report

To the U. S. Office of Education
Project No. 5-0076
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"Seminar to Study the Problems Affecting Library Service in Metropolitan Areas"

In the summer of 1964, the Cooperative Research Program of the United States Office of Education awarded a contract to Rutgers - The State University to conduct a seminar during 1964-65. The Graduate School of Library Service and the Urban Studies Center jointly sponsored the application for the contract. The objectives of this project were to (a) provide reviews and summaries of topics in which research may be needed, (b) identify the areas of greatest need for research in respect to metropolitan library service, (c) gain some consensus as to the order of importance of the research topics, (d) provide consultative services to authorities who might be able to pursue the studies indicated, and (e) assist in locating persons and agencies with the research capacity required to pursue the studies.

It was originally planned that this Seminar to Study the Problems Affecting Library Service in Metropolitan Areas would consist of a five-day meeting to which a select group of twenty-five to thirty-five librarians, social scientists, and educators concerned with metropolitan area problems were to be invited. Formal papers were to be prepared in advance by the participants.

At a planning session attended by seven persons, including both librarians and social scientists, it was decided to approach the matter somewhat differently. It was felt that a series of small one-day unstructured meetings might be more effective than the "one-shot" conference which had been originally proposed. It was believed that the advantages of the unstructured approach would be to achieve personal and close involvement in library-centered research on the part of the social scientists and to convey ideas and attitudes from the other disciplines to the librarians. In this way, it was hoped that persons from both librarianship and the social sciences would regard the library as an interesting and attractive focus for research.

A series of nine one-day sessions was scheduled. Invitations were mailed to a total of 127 librarians, social scientists, educators and authorities in related fields who were chosen on such bases as interest in metropolitan area problems and in research. Of the 127 persons invited, in addition to the Director and Assistant Director, sixty-eight actually participated in sessions of the Seminar. Visitors traveled to New Brunswick, New Jersey, the place of the meetings, from fourteen states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. They represented all sections of the country. A complete list of Seminar participants may be found in an appendix to this report.

In preparation for each session, the invited guests were sent lists of questions that might be considered, bibliographies, and other materials that might serve to stimulate active discussion of library problems. Each session was devoted to whatever subjects relating to library services in metropolitan areas the dozen or so participants elected to discuss. About a half-dozen of the participants constituted a "core" group and were, with occasional exceptions present at all sessions. The other participants varied from meeting to meeting. Twelve persons attended more than one session.

Consultative services have, in addition, been provided to the Higher Education Coordinating Council of St. Louis, which is contemplating a study of information needs in the area. It is possible that this service might have been used more had the term of the project been longer.

This document is the final report of the Seminar to Study the Problems Affecting Library Service in Metropolitan Areas. It is hoped that the report will serve to encourage research into the problems facing all types and sizes of libraries in metropolitan areas.

The report represents a synthesis of the thoughts of the participants in the project. The Seminar would have been a failure were it not for the fine cooperation given by all of the librarians, social scientists, and educators who attended. We are indebted to them all.

Special thanks are due Dr. Ralph W. Conant of the Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, who gave unstintingly of his time and energy so that this project might profit thoroughly from the experience he gained as Conference Coordinator of the Symposium on Library Functions in the Changing Metropolis, which was held in May, 1963; he served as a member of the permanent "core" group.

The Graduate School of Library Service and the Urban Studies Center at Rutgers - The State University are to be congratulated for the splendid support which they have given this project from its inception. Dean Neal Harlow and other Library School faculty have generously served as participants in the Seminar. Mr. John E. Bebout and his staff have likewise given us invaluable assistance. Special mention should be made of Dr. David Popenoe and Mrs. Virginia P. Whitney of the Urban Studies Center who served as members of the permanent core group; Mrs. Whitney served throughout as Seminar Reporter.

"Areas for Research," which comprises the bulk of this Final Report, will appear as a chapter in a much fuller publication which is to be issued separately.

Areas for Research

These pages represent an attempt to draw from records of the several discussion sessions held under this project the areas suggested for research affecting libraries and librarianship and to suggest some general order of priority. One of the objectives to be achieved through this project, as stated in the approved proposal, was to "...analyze the areas of greatest needs for research in respect to metropolitan library service..." and to "...gain some consensus as to the order of importance of the need..." Within each major area described, questions are posed which might become topics for research if fully developed as research proposals. In this sense, this report also treats another of the aims of the project "...to produce a specific list of research proposals in some order of priority..."

Early in the discussion sessions, it was decided that formulating and describing research topics in detail was unwise in that any mature research worker will wish to develop his own approach and methods when confronted with a given set of circumstances. This decision was influenced by the statements of several social scientists that metropolitan areas differ so much from each other that a research proposal prepared for one area might have little relevance for another.

Similarly, it was decided after one or two discussion

sessions that it would be unwise to attempt to develop and present a list of research proposals as "complete" or "exhaustive." The following reasons provide the basis for this decision: First, no list of specific questions or projects can possibly be complete, since all aspects of a general topic cannot be imagined at any given time. Second, the exhaustive-list approach cannot take into account future changes in conditions and would thus shortly be out of date. Third, it would be impossible to envision all combinations of these questions which might be stated. Fourth, making such a list ignores the effect which research results have upon the formulation of future questions.

For these reasons, the comprehensive-list approach is believed to be limiting, whereas the purpose of the discussions and of this report is to expand the research possibilities for the future.

These reasons are set forth in some detail partly because there was disclosed during the sessions an important difference of opinion between social scientists and practicing librarians concerning what constitutes research and how a field of endeavor may best be advanced through research. In part, this difference of outlook may spring from the background of the "Rutgers Seminar." Though the project, as actually funded, concerned <u>research</u>, it had its genesis in a proposal for a series of studies, structured so as to provide information useful in the <u>administration</u> of public libraries in metropolitan areas. Thus, some librarians

expected to have a list of specific study proposals emerge from the sessions, leading to some kind of "final report." One even suggested that a handbook of operations would be appreciated.

Social scientists, on the other hand, showed little interest in or regard for such specificity. Their position may be summed up in two statements: First, structured studies of particular institutions are the responsibility of operating agencies (libraries, in this case). Irrespective of the value to managers of the institutions, such studies are only rarely of interest to social scientists because they seldom produce new information or especially valuable insights. Second, research in the social sciences generally does not have the short-run cumulative effect which structured studies may have, but provides an opportunity to produce new information and insights which can be useful in various fields of activity. Thus, research with a library focus may attract the attention of mature social science research workers while operational studies ordinarily will not.

There was general agreement that librarianship does not at present contain a sufficient research capacity to permit rapid expansion of research activities and will, therefore, have to reply upon the social sciences for experienced personnel, at least for some time to come.

AREAS FOR RESEARCH

Because of the method employed in this project, many opinions were expressed in somewhat tentative form. In addition, certain similar ideas were expressed with enough variation in emphasis to make it difficult to conduct any "count" of the frequency with which areas for research were mentioned. Consequently, this summary is set forth with some expression of priority of mention, but not with any belief that the order of topics is to be considered as hard and fast.

In retrospect, one of the impressions which some of the "core" group took from the discussion sessions is that practicing librarians are quite concerned with efficiency and that within the bounds of the type of library in which they have had their most significant expreience. That is to say, the librarians who participated in these discussions seemed often preoccupied with organization and techniques of various kinds and with locating enough money and talent to press on toward standards set by their part of the profession. Social scientists, on the other hand, placed much of their emphasis on the effects of reading and libraries upon people and other aspects of effectiveness. This generalization does some disservice to both groups. And, of course, the two aims of efficiency and effectiveness are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

If this strong residual impression reflects the actual situation, it suggests that measurement of effectiveness is to be placed high on the scale of criteria for allocation of research talent when it is drawn from outside the profession. Then, the most important area for research will be those involving the assumptions and objectives of libraries and librarianship and audiences (actual and potential). The closely inter-related parts of this large concern could be subdivided in many different ways. Below are some suggestions as to possible subdivisions and questions which might be raised.

Assumptions: The librarian bases his objectives, his methods of implementing them and any conclusions he may reach about progress toward objectives on assumptions. This is not a criticism but rather an acknowledgment of a necessary condition. For example, the librarian assumes that the people he serves need access to library collections; that they need the collections and services he offers; and that the need for these has a more or less direct relationship either to the size of the population to which the collections and services are offered or to the well-being of the organization of which the library is a part.

Lacking ability to test objectively and to refine the many assumptions involved in the practice of librarianship, the practitioner tends to accept objectives, programs, and standards set by the profession as necessarily good and more or less com-

pletely stated. There is, thus, a very large question as to whether librarians should be the principal investigators in research into assumptions, per se. Yet, in one sense or another, almost any research project with a library focus may involve testing of one or more of our assumptions. Certainly, the testing of assumptions basic to the profession will demand both great objectivity and strong links with the practice of librarianship if there is to be practical effect upon the field.

Some of the many questions which might be posed are:

1. What assumptions might be discerned in library standards by educators, sociologists, political scientists or other students of special disciplines? Are these assumptions generally aligned with contemporary insights developed in those disciplines?

2. Do librarians and social scientists view the assumptions on which librarianship is based more or less in the same light or are there markedly different interpretations?

3. Is there a relationship between librarians' assumptions and continuing research in librarianship? Which of the assumptions has served as the basis for the formulation of research proposals? Of those proposals, which have been carried through to completion? What effect on practice can be traced?

4. What assumptions do librarians make about their audiences? Do these assumptions match the facts?

Objectives: The setting of objectives for any organization is ultimately a matter of judgment, not of research along. However, it would be most useful in questioning present objectives to have a body of fact to which the administrator might refer as he sets or changes objectives.

The objectives of libraries are stated in many ways. Professional standards commonly set forth some consensus as to objectives for the various kinds of libraries. Professional texts and other writings elaborate or make specific these statements. By-laws of libraries, public pronouncements and other documents reiterate or amplify these objectives. Thus, even the library for which no specific objectives have been stated can lay claim to objectives by calling upon others of the same general type. But these are professed objectives. When a profession or organization professes its objectives, it necessarily erects a large structure under which people of differing points of view may find homes. Thus, the practiced objectives of a given library may not be the same as the ones to which it lays claim. Furthermore, each person who uses a library may impute objectives to it, and these objectives may differ from day to day. Some questions which might be raised are:

1. Is there agreement to library objectives which can be traced through written statements and in conversation with librarians? Historically, have these objectives changed or do they appear today more or less

as they did in the past?

2. Do these stated objectives appear to be the same as actual or practiced objectives, as determined by various tests such as the evaluation of collections and service programs, close analysis of actual users, and allotment of funds to various activities?
3. Do people who use libraries recognize stated or actual objectives as valid, or does each user tend to bring his own objectives to the library? How narrowly or broadly does the user see library objectives? How about people who do not use libraries? How about community leaders?
4. Are there distinctive differences in the objectives imputed to libraries by people in different social, educational, or economic levels?
5. Is there a relationship between financial support of libraries and the objectives imputed to them?

Audience: It was acknowledged by both librarians and non-librarians during the discussions that libraries reach rather small audiences. It has been common for some years among public librarians to feel that the development or refinement of services without expansion of audiences is justifiable. Planners, political scientists, sociologists, and educators expressed themselves as believing that though exploration of this severely limited use of libraries and of potential audiences in an objective fashion is a matter of great

urgency. This urgency is not felt, perhaps because the library "non-user" is not so clerely a problem as is, for example, the school pupil who is a "non-learner." The non-user just never appears to present himself as a problem.

The potential audience at the lower end of the socio-economic scale occupied much of the time of several of the meetings. Almost every existing practice of libraries and almost every present attitude of librarians were questioned as to relevance to this group. The possible relevance of the library to these groups in terms of materials collected and services offered was both propounded and questioned. Similarly, a good deal of time was also spent on the question of why so many adults who are prepared through education and occupation to use libraries do not do so. Investigation of actual and potential audiences, in short, may take many different directions, and a variety of forms of investigation are appropriate. This "market research" type of investigation was deemed to be of continuing importance in view of the ongoing population movements which are a characteristic of the process of urbanization. Thus, longitudinal (long-term, continuing) studies as well as cross-sectional studies were suggested as a means of keeping tabs on the actual and potential audiences of libraries. Long term trends such as the consolidation of schools were also believed to influence this matter and thus to provide reasons for continuing studies of population in relation to library services and/or information need.

In the preceding paragraph, investigation of particular segments of the population is suggested. Another approach to the study of actual and potential audience might be the attempt to discover general patterns in reading, in need for information, and in the effects of reading or information supply. The types of investigations required for these broad areas would be different (and probably much more expensive) that in the more specific types mentioned first. At the same time, there is perhaps greater chance that the larger studies would provide knowledge of a type which could lead to broad-scale reorientation of library objectives and programs.

Some illustrative questions which might be developed into research proposals are:

1. What are the social and economic (or other) characteristics of the persons who use the library? Are there characteristic differences between people who normally use only a single library or library outlet and those who use several libraries or outlets? How do these characteristics compare with these of the population in the neighborhood in which the library is located? In the whole community?

2. Can materials and programs which have relevance for people of widely varying backgrounds be successfully incorporated into the existing public or school library? Is greater use of materials and services realized when collections for persons of different backgrounds are separately housed and

serviced? Which services are found most widely acceptable in various neighborhoods?

3. What long term changes in types of materials circulated, reference questions asked, or characteristics of library clientele take place?

4. What do people read, and what, if anything, does reading impel them to do? What changes, if any, occur in reading and reading/action patterns?

5. Are there significant differences in reading patterns and other related matters ("bookishness") among people in different communities?

Information Need and Supply: Questions about what information may be needed and what needs become demands (that is to say, what needs are accompanied by ability to pay the required price) are, of course, closely related to questions concerning audiences. The needs for information may be presumed to vary widely depending on the sophistication of the audience, educational and cultural level of the audience, and many other factors. Some though not all of these needs become demands, it may also be presumed. Furthermore, the matching of informational need with information supply is a difficult process, not performed at all in some instances and almost accidentally in others. Systematic investigation of need and demand by type of potential or by

actual library audience, as well as broad-scale inquiry into the various ways by which information is acquired by individuals (or the reasons why it is not acquired) might lead to increased understanding of potential areas of activity for libraries.

Some questions which might be posed are:

1. What information is required by subject specialists in the performance of continuing studies of society? Where is that information available, or what would be required to make it available? To what extent are the materials of study of various disciplines included in libraries? What changes in this situation have taken place?

2. Can information required by students at certain levels of schooling be set forth in quantitative terms? How do these requirements vary from level to level and from place to place?

3. What needs for information can be discovered in persons of various economic, educational, and social levels? What needs are translated into demands and what prices are people apparently willing to pay for information?

4. From what sources do people draw information? What factors appear to impede information flow? What factors appear to ease information flow?

Social and Political Factors:

The library itself may be considered as a social system operating within a larger social system or environment. The

people who work in libraries, it may be assumed, have or acquire characteristics which enable them to become functional within the organization. It is possible that some of these characteristics either encourage patrons of the library to continue to use the library or not to use it. Some may tend either to encourage or to discourage innovation in library services and routines.

The library operates in a political environment, whether it is a public library in a large city or a special library in a profit-making organization. While the library is a "safe" institution, ordinarily, in the sense that few people will seriously discuss replacing it entirely, there is some evidence to suggest that library support is declining when compared with population increases, drop in dollar value, and other variables. It seems possible that the benefits of supporting libraries have become less attractive, or that the level of cost at which communities are willing to support libraries has declined for reasons not readily determined. The two aspects of internal socialization and adjustment to the political environment give rise to numerous questions which might become the bases for research proposals.

1. Are there discerible attitudes common to library staff members in a particular institution? In several similar institutions or types of library work? Are these attitudes important in patron use of library services? What sorts of individuals are acceptable to the staff as patrons? Which suspect?

2. What reactions result in attitudes following the influx of new or "different" types of patrons (for example, the influx of students into young adult rooms which occurred in the mid 1950's)?

3. What changes in attitudes take place among library staff members over a period of time? Are these attitudes reflected in decisions regarding services or collections?

4. What information would have to be collected to reveal the extent, if any, to which the library's ability to supply information is lagging behind both population growth and the body of available information?

5. Who makes decisions regarding the level of financial support of the library? To what extent do these decisions reflect community opinion? Are these decisions influenced or passively accepted by the library staff and/or governing authority? Do answers to these questions bear close similarity to answers to related questions posed regarding other educational institutions?

6. What has been the function of the library as it has been seen by members of the community power structure? Does the library staff have contact with the power structure?

7. What has been the "impact" of the library on the community as measured by community attitudes and actual use of the collections and services?

Education and Training for Work in Libraries: Some sense of need for examination of the education of librarians is discernible in the preceding paragraphs. For the most part, this sense was not

expressed often in specific terms. At times, however, suggestions which clearly indicated questioning of present educational practices and major curricula trends were voiced. The closely allied concept of study of manpower utilization was also mentioned occasionally. These trends, then, were part of the fabric, but seldom clearly visible, despite their obvious importance. The quality of library school faculties, encouragement of the development of scholarship in the field, and the flexibility (or inflexibility) of library school curricula have obvious effects upon the attitudes of librarians regarding innovations of all kinds. These matters may be approached directly through inquiry into the specific curricula, course content, qualifications of faculty members, and other matters. They may be approached indirectly, too, through studies of what librarians do with their time, to what extent librarians call upon their education in making decisions, and what the process of socialization to librarianship involves.

This topic is, of course, a broad one. Questions regarding training for various levels of work in libraries and of mid-career training for professional librarians as they advance in the profession were also raised. For example, the first question immediately below suggests that librarians may engage in work which could be assigned to persons without extensive education.

Some lines of inquiry may be suggested by these questions:

1. How do librarians use their time? What aspects of their work do they regard as most important, both in terms

of what they say and in terms of how they spend their time?

What decisions are librarians at various levels of responsibility called upon to make, and what aspects of their education may be related to the making of those decisions?

3. What attitudes are encouraged in librarians during their period of professional education? Do these attitudes endure or are they dropped in time?

4. What attitude changes occur during the period of socialization to librarianship? Do these attitudes encourage or inhibit innovation?

Research in Library Operations: It was noted earlier in this chapter that research into library operations was generally considered by social scientists (and by most of the library school faculty members who participated) to be the responsibility of library administrators. That is, it was believed that studies related essentially to such matters as increasing efficiency of operation or financing of library services should be carried out or otherwise provided for by library managers. In view of the relatively large number of practicing librarians who participated in the discussions, it was surprising that there was not more emphasis on this type of research. It was generally agreed and occasionally lamented that what might be called library operational research has not been supported individually or collectively by library administrators, with a few notable exceptions. This distinction between operational study and research designed to

produce new insights, however, does not hold up always. There were some suggestions for research topics which fall somewhere between and which seemed to be of interest to at least some of the social scientists. Some questions indicative of these topics follow.

1. Do certain library users create systems of libraries on their own initiative; that is to say, are there "involuntary" or "phantom" systems of libraries created by determined seekers after information as well as "administered" systems recognized by librarians?

2. How can feedback devices be developed so as to give the library user opportunity to register his reaction to such central problems as book selection or quality of service?

3. What factors are involved in making library service both accessible and relevant to the needs of various people who use libraries? Can these factors be publicized in meaningful terms to people of similar characteristics who do not use libraries?

4. To what extent is centralization of library collections and services advantageous and disadvantageous to the specialist in various subject areas? Might it be advantageous to decentralize certain library activities while centralizing others within the same system?

5. What types of services and/or materials are regarded as most important or least important. What factors in library service

are regarded as being most important or least important by subject specialists?

Historical Studies: Perhaps because no historians were involved in the discussions, there was general agreement that histories of libraries should not be given an especially high priority rating on any list of research topics. At the same time, there was some sentiment that the exploration of trends and the background of ideas in librarianship should be valuable to the profession generally and occasionally to a specific library. Certainly, there was agreement that developing an understanding of the history of one's profession is of value to the student in setting current practices in context and in gaining some grasp of possible future developments.

Some possible questions might be:

1. What insights as to the development of the public library may we gain as a result of the attention given recently to the various aspects of urbanization?

2. What has been the relationship of the development of the research library to the development of research activity generally? How has one influenced the other?

3. What factors have influenced the development of the secondary school library? What of these might influence other similar developments (for example, elementary school libraries)?

4. What interrelationships among various types of libraries (for example, school and public) appear to have encouraged or retarded the development of one or another type?

Summary: A remarkable array of areas and topics for research were brought out during the discussions. This report could not possibly be exhaustive of all those areas and topics. Perhaps the most significant discoveries, however, were not those ideas, but rather that librarians so often ask questions which they believe to be subjects for research but which experienced research workers interpret otherwise. Thus, the question in the librarian's mind may not be a "real" question to the social scientist. This is not to say that the librarian's question is not important to him, but that it is not a part of the subject area to which he has assigned it. For example, the question of how to get enough money to keep a public, college, special, or other library growing is not, as the librarian so often thinks, one of economics so much as it appears to the economist as a question related to the political environment in which the library operates. This incomplete communication, together with the differing conceptions as to the objectives of research (referred to earlier in this chapter) tend to erect an almost tangible barrier between practicing librarian and social scientist. The process of making the barrier somewhat less forbidding, begun

in the Symposium on Library Functions in the Changing Metropolis,[1] was carried forward in this "Seminar."

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1. See Conant, Ralph W. The Public Library and City. Cambridge, Mass., The M.I.T. Press, 1965, 216 p.

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